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The purpose of this study was to identify and explain factors which account for rural youths having lower attendance records and lower educational attainment than urban youths. The major objectives were: (1) to determine the factors affecting the school attendance and attainment of rural youths; (2) to determine the life aspirations of rural youths and the extent to which education serves these youths' needs; and (3) to develop information which will better serve public and private schools in meeting the needs of rural youths. Three questionnaires were administered to juniors, seniors, and their parents in 8 white, rural high schools in 2 Louisiana parishes. The attendance and dropout data from these 8 high schools were tabulated and analyzed. In conclusion, it was reported that negative educational values in their homes were largely responsible for biasing the educational opportunities of rural youth. (ES)

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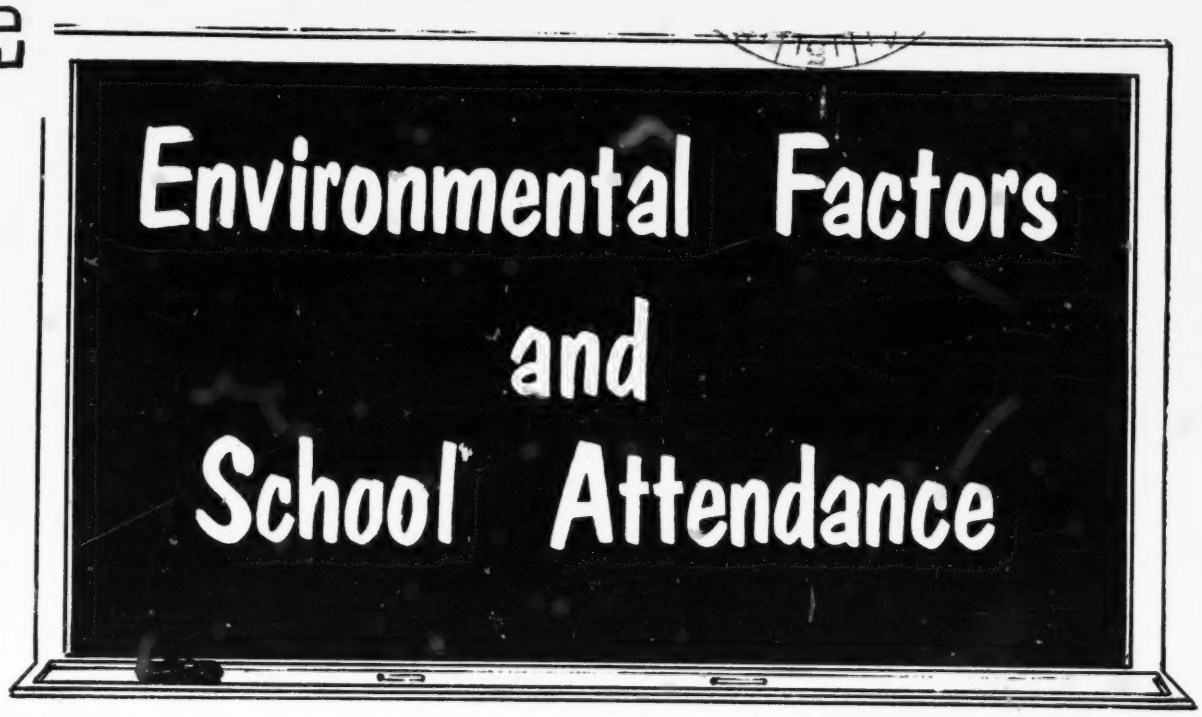

a Study in Rural Louisiana

ALVIN L. BERTRAND and MARION B. SMITH

RC 000 196

Louisiana State University
and
Agricultural and Mechanical College

Agricultural Experiment Station
Charles W. Upp
Director

In Cooperation With Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

FOREWORD

There has been great concern in recent years over the need for improving our levels of living and technology. These aims can be reached only if we make the best use of our available manpower. The study reported here takes cognizance of the fact that rural youth generally do not reach their educational potentials, primarily because of poor school attendance records. The purpose was to obtain information which could be used by various public and private agencies to improve school attendance and attainment levels and educational facilities in rural areas.

This report is based upon research conducted cooperatively by Louisiana State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Undertakings of this nature are in keeping with the goals of the Rural Development Program (under the sponsorship of six Federal departments) to improve rural levels of living.

Louisiana provided a challenging setting for this study inasmuch as its rural population ranks among the lowest in the nation in educational attainment. The findings and conclusions reported are deserving of the close attention of all persons concerned with the future development of the nation's manpower.

Margaret Jarman Hagood
Chief, Farm Population and
Rural Life Branch, A.M.S.
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Roland J. Pellegrin, Head
Departments of Sociology and
Rural Sociology
Louisiana State University

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Environmental Factors And School Attendance

*A Study in Rural Louisiana**

ALVIN L. BERTRAND and MARION B. SMITH

INTRODUCTION

Many studies have shown that rural youths have poorer school attendance records, lower educational attainment levels, fewer vocational skills, and lower occupational aspirations than urban youths.[1] These differentials have at least two major implications for the nation. First, they represent a serious talent loss at a time when there is critical need for trained manpower. Second, inequalities in education represent a great handicap to the many rural youths forced to compete with urban youths for employment. The problems which the above situations create are a challenge in the sense that they are not in keeping with our national credo which stresses both equality of opportunity and progress.

Concern over the above and related situations has led the Congress to pass various legislative measures designed to equalize educational opportunities throughout rural areas and between rural and urban communities. This study is one of several being done cooperatively by certain Department of Agriculture agencies and various Land Grant colleges and universities under the Rural Development Program.

It is an attempt to identify and explain the factors which account for differential school attainment in rural areas.

Major Objectives of the Study

The over-all aim of the study, as mentioned, was to determine and describe the factors accounting for differential school attainment in rural areas. Specific objectives were as follows:

1. To determine the factors affecting the school attendance and attainment of rural youth.

2. To determine the life aspirations of rural youths, and evaluate

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*This study is a cooperative project between the Department of Rural Sociology, Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Farm Population and Rural Life Branch, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

[1]See for example: Marion B. Smith, "Educational Progress in Louisiana From 1940 to 1949: Comparison of the School Advancement of Urban, Rural-Farm and Rural-Nonfarm Children," *Louisiana Schools,* Volume XXXIII, No. 9 (1956), 8-12.

the extent to which their educational facilities are serving these aspirations.

3. To develop information that could be used by various public and private agencies to improve school attendance and attainment levels, and educational facilities in rural areas.

Method and Procedure of Study

The objective and setting of this study were such as to present special methodological problems. Since the study related to the Rural Development Program, it had to be done in relatively low income areas. In addition, it was evident that sampling procedures and questionnaires had to be worked out for several different population groups. Decisions regarding the above considerations were made after consultation with representatives of the Louisiana State Department of Education, the Vocational Education Department of Louisiana State University, and the Louisiana Agricultural Extension Service.

It was decided to conduct the study in two parishes (counties), Avoyelles in south central Louisiana and Franklin in north central Louisiana. Both of these parishes are "pilot counties" in the Rural Development Program. Other characteristics which made them ideal for this study will be apparent in the description of the study area which follows.

Once the study areas had been selected, a decision had to be made regarding the specific populations to be interviewed. It was obvious that certain classes of rural youths in school and rural youths who had dropped out of school should be questioned. A decision was made to interview the juniors and seniors in four carefully selected white rural high schools in each of the study parishes and the drop-outs from these schools in the same age group (16-19 years) as the juniors and seniors. Furthermore, it was felt that the parents of both groups of youngsters should be interviewed to determine whether parental and family influence related significantly to the problem under study.

Accordingly, three questionnaires were developed for the personal interview of a sample of persons in each of the population groups named above. These schedules were pre-tested and modified in the light of the findings. It is important to note that a decision was made to interview either the father or mother of youths rather than the mother alone, as had been done in some previous studies. The pre-test indicated that fathers were frequently present during interviews and that their attitudes were essentially the same as the mothers. In addition, the role of the father as decision maker structured the situation in such a way as to make the wife hesitant to answer freely, in instances where both were present.

The interviewing for the study was done in January, February, and

March, 1959. In administering Schedule I, designed for the youths still in school, members of the research team traveled to the schools being studied, and had all members of the junior and senior classes complete the questionnaire in the classroom. The second questionnaire, Schedule II, was designed for youths 16-19 years of age who had dropped out of the sample schools. A substantial number of the drop-outs were still living in their home parishes and were easily located. A smaller proportion had moved away and could not be found. (Resources did not permit an individual follow-up of persons having moved out of the state.) Questionnaires were mailed to every drop-out who could not be contacted but for whom an address was available. The response to mailed questionnaires was negligible, however.

The third questionnaire (Schedule III) was designed (with certain alternative questions) for the interview of parents of both groups of youths. A random sample of one-third of the youths still in school was drawn and one parent of each youth in this sample was interviewed. For the drop-outs, interviews were conducted with all corresponding parents (father or mother) who could be found.

In Avoyelles Parish a total of 190 youths in the eleventh and twelfth grades completed schedules. Of these, 102 were completed by females. A total of 179 schedules were obtained from juniors and seniors in Franklin Parish, 93 of which were from females. Altogether, data were obtained from 174 boys and 195 girls.

The drop-outs interviewed were distributed as follows: In Avoyelles Parish, 17 boys and 22 girls from 16 to 19 years of age were questioned. The Franklin Parish interviewees included 15 boys and 14 girls. Taken together, a total of 68 drop-outs from 16 to 19 years of age were included. It may be noted that approximately three-fifths (58.2 per cent) of all drop-outs from the eight schools were interviewed. The majority of those not interviewed had moved from the state.

Altogether, 125 parents of youths in school and 68 parents of youths having dropped out of school were interviewed.

Description of the Sample Parishes

The location of the two sample parishes is shown in Figure 1. A brief review of selected population and agricultural characteristics of these parishes is included to help the reader visualize the setting for the study.

Avoyelles is located in what is known as French South Louisiana. Many residents of the parish use French in their daily conversations, although they may be bi-lingual. A large percentage of the people of the parish belong to the Roman Catholic Church. (It was estimated by the principals of the four sample schools that 98 per cent of their stu-

dents were Catholic.) Many of the folkways of the people of the parish are traceable to their French cultural background.

There were 38,031 persons in Avoyelles Parish in 1950, according to Census reports. Over one-fourth (26 per cent) of this number were Negroes. The parish ranked well above the state average in percentage of the population classified as rural-farm (45.6 per cent vs. 21.2 per cent)

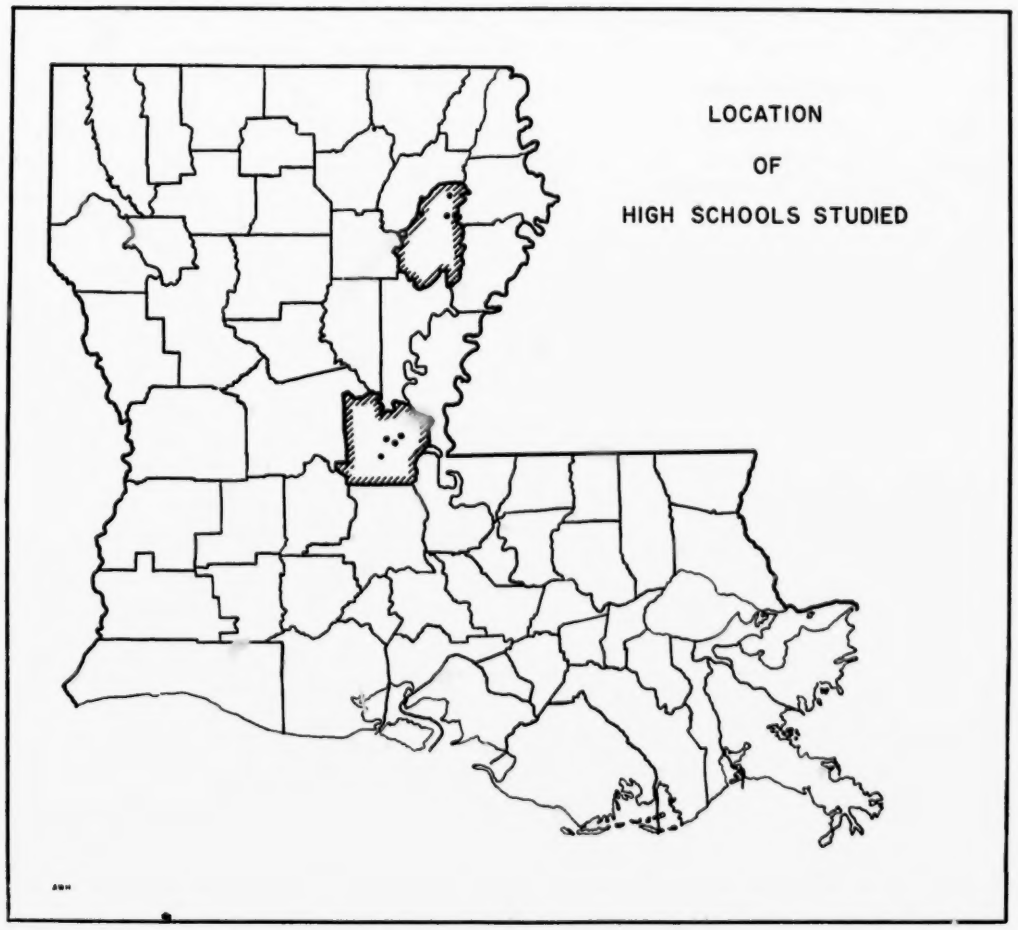

FIGURE 1.—LOCATION OF SAMPLE PARISHES AND SCHOOLS

and rural-nonfarm (32.6 per cent vs 24.0 per cent) in residence. Avoyelles Parish residents fall below the state median in educational attainment. In 1950, the median years of schooling for males 25 years of age and over in the parish was 5.8 years. Females in these ages had a slightly higher median of 6.4 years.[2]

[2]The median school years completed and percentage of functional literacy of adult males in Louisiana in 1949 are shown, by parishes, in: Marion B. Smith, "Educational Progress in Louisiana from 1949 to 1950," *Louisiana Schools,* Volume XXX, No. 7, (1953), 6-7.

There were 4,467 farms in Avoyelles Parish in 1954, 30 per cent of which were tenant operated. The average size of farms was 50.1 acres, with only 1 per cent of all farms being 500 acres or more. The chief crops raised in the parish are cotton, corn, and hay, although a considerable acreage of sweet and Irish potatoes is planted each year. Crop enterprises are supplemented by a sizeable beef cattle, dairy, and poultry industry.

In 1954, 93 per cent of the farms in the parish were served with electricity, but only 21 per cent had telephones.

Franklin Parish is located in Non-French North Louisiana. The residents of the parish are chiefly of Anglo-Saxon descent, and the principals of the schools studied estimated that 98 per cent of the students were Protestants.

The 1950 census reports indicate there were 29,376 people in Franklin Parish at that time. Close to two-fifths of the population (37 per cent) were Negroes. It is significant that the parish included a higher percentage of rural-farm residents (75 per cent) than the majority of the parishes of the state. Only 13 per cent of the residents of the parish were classified as urban.

At mid-century the educational attainment of Franklin Parish residents 25 years and over was well below the state average. Among the males, the median years of schooling completed was 5.7 (compared with 7.4 for the state), and among the females it was 6.7 (as compared with 7.9 for the state).

There were 4,171 farms in Franklin Parish in 1954. Almost three-fifths (58 per cent) of this number were operated by tenants. Farms averaged 79 acres in size, and 1.2 per cent of them were 500 acres or over. Cotton and corn are the predominant crops of the parish, although considerable hay and oats are grown. Beef cattle have increased in popularity as a farm enterprise in recent years.

Almost all the farmers of the parish reported electricity on their farms in 1954 (98 per cent). However, only one-fifth of them (20 per cent) said they had telephones.

The Enrollment and Teachers of Sample Schools

The location of the schools studied is shown in Figure 1. Each school was selected after consultation with the parish superintendent of schools. Four schools with 12 grades were selected in each parish. At the beginning of the school year, the individual enrollment of the four schools in Franklin Parish was 164, 210, 429, and 503 for a total of 1,306. The enrollment in the schools in Avoyelles Parish was 321, 326, 347, and 505, respectively, for a total of 1,499. The total high school enrollment was

421 in the four Franklin Parish schools and 492 in the four Avoyelles Parish schools.

The number of high school teachers ranged from 5 to 12 in the eight sample schools. Altogether, the four schools in Franklin Parish had a total of 37 high school teachers. The four schools in Avoyelles Parish had a total of 33 high school teachers. For the most part, the teachers in the sample high schools had a long tenure. Twenty teachers from each parish had at least 10 years teaching experience. Most of the teachers lived in the home community of their school, and the majority were born and reared locally.

In the sample schools, ten of the high school teachers in Avoyelles Parish and six of the high school teachers in Franklin Parish held master's degrees. All of the remainder of the high school teachers in both parishes, except one, held bachelor's degrees.

It may be noted that the schools studied were in an era of enrollment decline related to a decline in the general population. This fact occasioned some insecurity among the administrators and teachers of the schools.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The analysis of findings from a study such as the present one must proceed in terms of a theoretical model. Since it is proposed that readers go beyond the mere descriptive treatment of data, it was felt that it would be helpful to briefly outline the conceptual scheme in mind for the analyses of the findings.

By way of introduction, it may be noted that there have been many studies of educational attainment in rural areas. Most of these studies have concentrated on showing the relationship of certain socio-economic characteristics to school achievement.[3] A few researchers have gone so far as to explore the relationship between farm residence and levels of educational and occupational aspiration.[4] Beyond this, a host of descriptive investigations (some done in rural settings) have demonstrated the relation of social class to individual and group attitudes, opinions, judgements, and aspirations.[5] In the light of the findings of previous

[3]See: Selected Bibliography on Rural Education, Washington, D.C.: Department of Rural Education, National Education Association, 1954. For one of the later studies, see: E. Grant Youmans, *The Educational Attainment and Future Plans of Kentucky Rural Youths,* Lexington: Kentucky A.E.S. Bulletin No. 664, 1959.

[4]See, for example: Archie O. Haller and William H. Sewell, "Farm Residence and Levels of Educational and Occupational Aspirations," *The American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. LVII (1957) 407-411, and Russell Middleton and Charles M. Grigg, "Rural-Urban Differences in Aspirations," *Rural Sociology,* Vol. 24, (1959), 347-354.

[5]For recent examples, see: Alan B. Wilson, "Residential Segregation of Social Classes and Aspirations of High School Boys," *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 24, (1959), 836-845, and E. Grant Youmans, "Factors in Educational Attainment," *Rural Sociology,* Vol. 24, (1959), 21-28.

studies, the present writers assumed that differentials in school attainment in rural areas stemmed from participation in separate "concrete social systems." In this regard, the conceptual scheme of the rural social system presented by Loomis and Beegle is used as a frame of reference.[6] Loomis and Beegle state that "social systems are organizations composed of persons who interact more with members than with non-members when operating to attain the system's objectives."[7] They further say that social systems should be looked upon as functioning entities or wholes which are composed of interrelated parts or elements. Herbert Blumer, in the foreword to Loomis and Beegle's *Rural Sociology: Strategy of Change,* writes that the social system is an analytical scheme that "can be applied readily and meaningfully to the structure of rural society."

Social systems are characterized by two common elements, social structure and value orientation. The social structure of social systems may be explained as follows. In every society an individual learns quite early in life that certain members of the society act in special ways, according to their status-role positions. Each individual's behavior is guided by a set of rules or "norms" of behavior which relate to specific social action systems in society. Thus, if the individual has high status in a given system, he has more authority or power (the privilege of influencing the action of others). Behavior, according to normative patterns and in conformity with status-role requirements, is assured because of certain sanctions at the disposal of each social system. Sanctions are simply mechanisms for giving or inflicting "punishment" or, contrarywise, for presenting rewards.

The second component of social systems is value orientation. This includes the non-purposive behavior which persists in interpersonal relations. Illustrations of value orientation are seen in the intangible factors which bind men together, such as loyalty, affection, and kinship. In the words of Loomis and Beegle, "for purposes of empirical procedure, we consider value orientation as including the *ends* or *objectives* and *norms.*" Value orientation not only accounts for the "rules of the game" but for the things, ideas, or goals considered worthwhile.[8]

Loomis and Beegle utilize Toennies' concepts of familistic *Gemeinschaft* and contractual *Gesellschaft* to point up the difference in the value orientation of social systems. They interpret the former as including all human relationships based on emotion or inclination and in which the relationship is an end in itself. *Gesellschaft* systems encompass

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[6]See: Charles P. Loomis and J. Allan Beegle, *Rural Social Systems,* New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950, and Charles P. Loomis and J. Allan Beegle, *Rural Sociology: The Strategy of Change,* New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957.

[7]*Rural Social Systems,* p. 33.

[8]*Ibid.*

all associations stemming from rational and calculated wishes to attain given objectives.[9]

It was conceived for this study that the school drop-out problem in rural areas could be understood in terms of the two major social systems serving to condition and motivate individual youths—the family and the school. It was hypothesized that one type of family system would tend to emphasize educational goals and objectives, and in fact, encourage children to continue in school by indoctrinating them with educational values and aspirations. Conversely, another family, by virtue of a different value orientation would serve to effectively wean youth from schooling by playing down the value of education.

The schools were conceived as educational social systems which generally would serve to reinforce the positive educational values held by students. However, it was hypothesized that a school system would repel students to the extent that the latter were not accepted as bona fide members of the system.[10]

Note on Tabular Presentation

The reader will note that the data for this study were generally not broken down by sex and sample area. The reasons for this are given below.

Many studies have made a point of excluding girls in studies of high school drop-outs. The rationale for such a decision is usually that the majority of girls leave school to get married, and therefore little purpose is served in studying them, in terms of understanding the causes and effects of dropping out of school. In this study, it was decided that it was just as important to find out how many girls dropped out of school and why they dropped out of school as for boys. The rationale for this decision was that girls who dropped out, whether or not to get married, would be influenced by home and school environments in the same way as boys. Girls from homes that promoted education as a high value, for example, would not be likely to get married before graduation. Likewise, girls enjoying their school experiences would not be prone to leave them. Beyond these considerations, it was felt that the number of young women migrating from rural areas and entering the labor force was sufficient to justify the inclusion of girls in a study such as the present one.

The second procedure which needs explanation is the lumping of data from the two sample areas together. It was explained in the introduction that the two sample parishes were selected because they were more or less representative of north and south Louisiana, respectively.

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[9]*Rural Sociology: The Strategy of Change*, p. 12

[10]See: *Ibid.*, Chapters 3 and 8 for a discussion of the family and school as ongoing social systems.

It was also pointed out that the culture bases of the people in the two sample areas were quite different. However, it was thought best to group the data from the two sample areas because the sample for drop-outs was so small as to make intra-parish comparisons hazardous from a statistical reliability standpoint. A later study is planned to determine the significance of cultural differences to school attainment.

With respect to the tabular presentation, the reader will note that the N's for the different classes of interviewees vary slightly from one table to the next. This is because the number of "no responses" varied somewhat from one question to the next.

The chi square measure of probability was used exclusively in testing the homogeneity of the data presented. Tables where the difference between variables is significant at the .01 level are indicated. Differences at the .05 level were generally considered not significant because of the smallness of the sample.

THE SETTING: WHY RURAL YOUTHS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL

A first concern of the present study was the determination of the reasons why rural youths in the sample population dropped out of school. This information was considered basic to the study for several reasons. First, it would be possible to compare the findings in the study area with the findings of other studies. Second, it was hoped that clues to the underlying causes for the drop-out problem might be obtained in this way. In addition there would be an opportunity to determine the magnitude and seriousness of the problem.

Questions relating to the reasons for dropping out of school were put to the drop-outs themselves, to their parents, and to the principals of their schools. The responses of each group of interviewees is described and compared below, and where applicable the findings of certain previous investigations are reported.

The various reasons given by youths, when asked why they had dropped out of school, are shown in Table 1. It can be seen that by far the largest number (28) dropped out of school because of what could be termed "lack of interest." Over half of the 35 girls interviewed left school because of marriage, and this accounts for marriage ranking second as a reason for leaving school. Ten youths indicated they left school because they were needed at home and six others left for what they described loosely as "financial" reasons. The remaining three said they had to leave school because of health reasons.

Parents of drop-outs agree with their children regarding the reasons

why the youths left school. Practically the same percentage of parents and of drop-outs listed each of the separate reasons cited above.

The principals of the schools studied also cited lack of interest and marriage as the major reasons for students' dropping out of school. Al-

TABLE 1.—Drop-Outs' Reasons for Quitting School, by Sex

Reasons	Males	Females	Totals
	Number	*Number*	*Number*
Needed at home	4	6	10
Financial reasons	5	0	5
Marriage	1	19	20
Lack of interest	20	8	28
Health	1	2	3
Total	31	35	66

though principals were not quizzed about individual drop-outs from their schools, they were asked to give their over-all impressions of the important reasons for this problem. Typical comments were as follows: "They don't get encouragement at home," or "They do not receive co-operation from their parents."

The findings of this study are almost identical to the findings of other studies in and out of the state. For illustration, a study done of the drop-outs from the Calvin, Louisiana, High School in 1956 revealed that the three principal reasons for dropping out of school were: (1) lack of interest, (2) to work, and (3) to marry.[11] The conclusion of a recent study done in Whitman County, Washington, was that rural boys dropped out of school most frequently because they were not interested in school work. Girls usually dropped out because they wanted to get married.[12]

From the above it is clear that rural youths from low income areas who drop out of school generally do so because of lack of interest or motivation. As a matter of fact, when asked if they regretted quitting school, three-fifths of the boys (61 per cent) and one-half of the girls (47 per cent) said, "no." When asked if anything would have kept them in school, over two-thirds (68 per cent) of the boys and almost three-fourths (73 per cent) of the girls said, "no." The basic problem of drop-outs is therefore the apathy of youth. The remainder of this report is devoted to an investigation of the cause for this "negative" approach to schooling.

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[11]Maxey, James W., "Why Students Drop Out of Calvin, Louisiana High School Before Graduation," unpublished master's thesis, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1956.

[12]Carol Larson Stone, *High School Drop-Outs in a Rural County, Their Problems and Adjustment*, Pullman: Washington AES Bulletin No. 565, 1956, p. 17.

HOME ENVIRONMENT RELATED TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Many studies have shown that members of different socio-economic strata, as individuals and groups, have differing value orientation.[13] In general, studies of this nature have indicated that members of the working classes or of families representing the lower rungs of the socio-economic scale have tended to devalue education. In other words, they do not feel that educational attainment makes a significant difference in one's life. In turn, parents from these socio-economic levels do not, as a rule, indoctrinate their children with high educational aspirations.

The latter process has been called "social inheritance," and it explains much about the way people behave. The thesis of this study, as brought out before, is that differentials in school attendance can partially be explained on this basis. It is hypothesized that the attitudes and values toward education which a youngster learns at home go a long way toward explaining his success in school.

The discussion that follows is designed to show some aspects of the home environment of youths still in school and of those who have dropped out of school. If the hypothesis indicated above is correct, the home environment of drop-outs should have certain definite and recognizable characteristics and they and their parents should hold relatively low educational values.

Place of Residence Related to School Attendance

Each youth questioned was asked to state whether he lived on a farm; in the open country but not on a farm; or in a population center of 2,500 persons or less. (No population centers of over 2,500 persons were involved in the study.) The purpose in mind was to determine whether place of residence was significantly related to school attendance.

Altogether, 63 per cent of the youths still in school and 73 per cent of the youths who had dropped out of school were from farm homes. Some 13 per cent of the former group lived in the open country but not on farms and 24 per cent were from homes in towns and villages. Only 17 per cent of the drop-outs said they lived in the open country but not on farms. One out of every 10 drop-outs lived in a population center of less than 2,500 people. (See Table 2.)

The percentage differences between the two classes of youths with residence in the categories shown above are not significant. This finding indicates that in rural areas residence on a farm or off a farm is not an important factor in school attendance. It should not be concluded that residence will not be important in rural-urban comparisons, however.

[13]Wilson, *op. cit.*

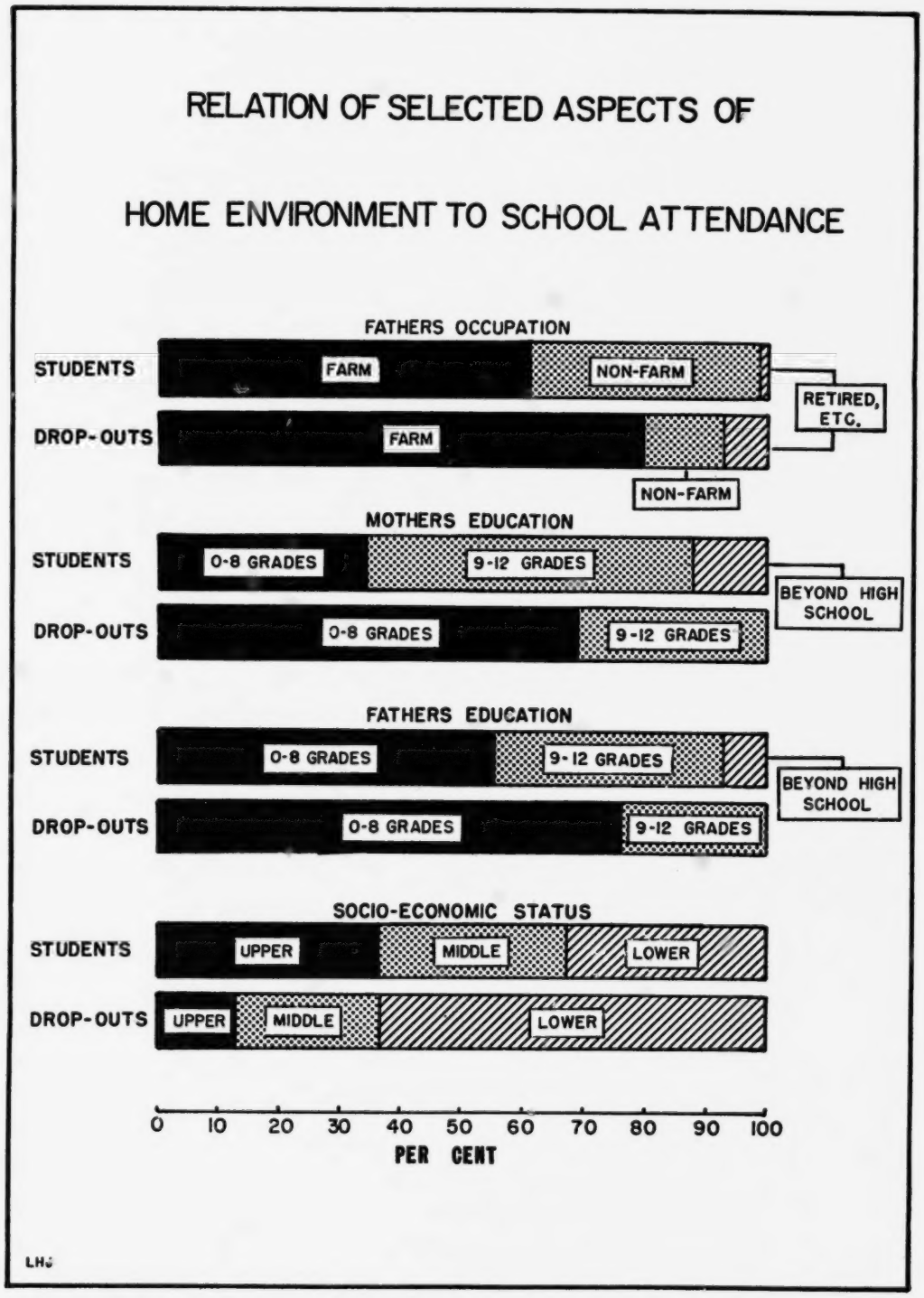

FIGURE 2.—RELATION OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF HOME ENVIRONMENT TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

TABLE 2.—School Attendance Related to Place of Residence

Residence	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Rural non-farm				
1. Population centers less than 2,500	89	24	7	10
2. Open country	49	13	11	17
Rural farm	230	63	48	73
TOTALS	368	100	66	100

Occupation of Father Related to School Attendance

Studies have shown that a high level of educational aspiration and achievement is more typical of the so-called white collar classes than of the working classes.[14] For this reason, it was deemed worthwhile to investigate the occupation of the fathers of youths in the study groups.

Of the youths in school, three-fifths came from homes where the father was a farmer. In contrast, four-fifths of the drop-outs' fathers were farmers. The fathers of the remainder of each group were doing non-farm work. Five fathers of youths in school and four fathers of drop-outs were either deceased or retired.

The above findings indicate a significant relationship between occupation and school attendance, as may be seen in Table 3. Youths from homes where farming or farm work is the father's occupation definitely drop out of school faster than youths from homes where the father is not a farmer.

At first glance, this finding seems to contradict the finding that residence is not significantly related to school attendance. However, it must be remembered that a family can live in a small town or in the open country not on a farm and the father still be employed as a farm laborer or even own and operate a farm.

Youths whose fathers were farmers were asked whether their fathers were farm operators or farm laborers. It was found that children of farm laborers are significantly more prone to drop out of school than the children of farm operators. (See Table 3.)

Youths whose fathers had non-farm jobs were asked if their fathers were in business or professional work or were doing wage work. Interestingly, 30 per cent of the fathers of non-farm, in-school youths were in business or professional work of one kind or another, but no father of a drop-out, not farming, did anything but wage work.

[14]S. M. Lipset and R. Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959, Chap. 9.

TABLE 3.—School Attendance Related to Father's Occupation

Occupation	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
General class*				
Farm	199	61	50	79
Non-farm	120	37	9	14
Other	5	2	4	7
TOTAL	324	100	63	100
Farm*				
Operator, full-time	117	59	18	36
Laborer	46	23	26	52
Operator, part-time	36	18	6	12
TOTAL	199	100	50	100
Non-farm*				
Business and professional	36	30	0	0
Wage worker	84	70	9	100
TOTAL	120	100	9	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level, as measured by the chi square test.

The above findings support the hypothesis of the study. It demonstrates that youths whose fathers are in the lower socio-economic levels are more likely to drop out of school. In this regard, many investigators have demonstrated that farm laborers as well as non-farm workers have relatively low levels of living and of education and participate minimally in community life and institutions.

Education of Parents Related to School Attendance

Children of parents with a high degree of formal education tend to have high educational achievement. For this reason, it was deemed important to determine educational differentials between parents of youths still in school and of youths having dropped out of school.

As may be seen in Table 4, no parent of drop-outs had college experience, but 13 per cent of the mothers and 7 per cent of the fathers of children still in school had attended college. At the opposite extreme, 76 per cent of the fathers and 69 per cent of the mothers of drop-outs had not obtained formal schooling beyond the eighth grade. The comparable percentages for parents of youths still in school were 55 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively.

It is clear to the most casual observer that parents' education is significantly related to school attendance. There is little question as to the importance of the above finding. Obviously, the level of education of parents represents part of the family environmental complex of youths.

The inference can be drawn that parents with education are more likely to see the advantages of schooling and to place a high value on education. These values are, in turn, transmitted to their children. This is not to say that all parents without a great deal of formal schooling do not

TABLE 4.—School Attendance Related to Education of Parents

Formal Education of Parents	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Educational attainment of mother*				
0-8 grades	118	34	41	69
9-12 grades	184	53	18	31
College experience	46	13	0	0
TOTAL	348	100	59	100
Educational attainment of father*				
0-8 grades	191	55	47	76
9-12 grades	133	38	15	24
College experience	26	7	0	0
TOTAL	350	100	62	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level, as measured by the chi square test.

have an appreciation for higher education. Such an appreciation may be developed through informal means. Nevertheless, the fact stands that the educational attainment of parents relates closely to their children's school attainment.

Family Mobility Related to School Attendance

The mobility, for the past 10 years, of the families of the youths studied was ascertained. Approximately the same percentage of drop-out families (83 per cent) and of non-drop-out families (78 per cent) had not changed residences in this time. In both groups the majority of the families making a move had made only one or two moves. Just 7 per cent of the families with youths in school and 8 per cent of the families with drop-outs had moved at least three times. (See Table 5.) These findings indicate that family mobility has little effect, if any, upon school attendance because of the low mobility of the families studied. This pattern is not unusual in rural areas.

TABLE 5.—School Attendance Related to Family Mobility

Family Moves in Past 10 Years	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
No moves	281	78	55	83
1-2 moves	53	15	6	9
3 or more moves	25	7	5	8
TOTAL	359	100	66	100

Parental Attendance at School Activities Related to School Attendance

The parents of youths in school attend more school activities than do parents of drop-outs. This pattern is consistent with regards to both athletic events and school plays. These were the two major activities open to the general public in the schools studied. Parent-Teachers Associations were not present in all the schools and therefore could not be studied. (Parents of drop-outs were asked about their participation at the time their children were in school.)

The percentage of parents from the two sample groups who "never attended" school functions dramatically portrays the picture of parental participation in school events. Only about one-fourth of the parents of youths in school stated they never attended school athletic events. In contrast, two-thirds of the parents of drop-outs did not attend such events. Attendance at plays was more pronounced, but comparisons show that 11 per cent of the in-school group as compared with 34 per cent of the drop-out group never attended functions of this type. (See Table 6.)

The findings regarding parental attendance at school activities indicated that certain families follow through in supporting school functions. Such behavior cannot help but reinforce the educational values of their children. It cannot be overlooked, of course, that parents of children who are making a success out of school would have more opportunity to observe their children in action at a school activity, and thus have more incentive to participate as spectators. Community members who relate themselves to their school, generally support its activities.

Socio-Economic Status of Parents Related to School Attendance

One aim of this study was to determine whether or not socio-economic status of parents was related significantly to the school attendance of their children. By socio-economic status is meant the relative position of families with regard to the possession of certain items and facilities such

TABLE 6.—School Attendance Related to Parents' Attendance at School Activities

Activity	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Athletic events:*				
Usually	30	25	11	17
Occasionally	58	48	12	18
Never	32	27	43	65
TOTAL	120	100	66	100
Plays and musical events:*				
Usually	53	47	18	28
Occasionally	48	42	24	38
Never	12	11	22	34
TOTAL	113	100	64	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level, as measured by the chi square test.

as refrigerators, automobiles, running water, electricity, etc.[15] Income is measured indirectly in such scales, and problems related to the determination of family income do not arise. Socio-economic status is considered a reliable measure of the relative standing of the particular family in the community.

The interviewee parents, both of youths in school and of drop-outs, were classified into three socio-economic status groups: upper, middle, and lower. Tabulations were made for each group to show which had

[15]The socio-economic status scale used was an adaptation of the Sewell Scale. (William H. Sewell, "A Short Form of the Farm Family Socio-Economic Status Scale," *Rural Sociology*, 8, (1942), pp. 161-170.)

The items listed below were weighted as shown and summed for each family studied. Those families with scores of 83 or more were classed as upper; those with scores from 77 to 82 as middle; and those 76 or below as lower. Items and weights used were as follows:

Electric lighting facilities: Yes (6), No (3)
Water piped into house: Yes (8), No (4)
Power washer: Yes (6), No (3)
Refrigerator: Yes (6), No. (3)
Radio: Yes (6), No. (3)
Telephone: Yes (6), No. (3)
Automobile: Yes (5), No (2)
Daily newspaper: Yes (6), No. (3)
Wife's education: 0-7 years (2), 8 years (4), 9-11 years (6), 12 years (7), 13 years and up (8)
Husband's education: 0-7 years (3), 8 years (5), 9-11 years (6), 12 years (7), 13 years and up (8)
Wife's church attendance: Regular (8), Occasionally (6), Never (3)
Husband's church attendance: Regular (8), Occasionally (6), Never (3)
Construction of house: brick, stucco, painted (5), unpainted (3)
Television: Yes (6), No (3)

the highest percentage of drop-outs. Analysis of these data indicates a significant relationship between socio-economic status and school attendance. Only one-third of the youths in school came from families in the lower socio-economic level. Conversely, almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of the drop-outs were from families in the lower socio-economic level. (See Table 7.)

The implications of these findings are serious over and beyond their implications for school attendance. Educational programs are needed

TABLE 7.—School Attendance Related to Socio-Economic Status of Family

Socio-Economic Status Rank	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Upper*	46	37	9	13
Middle	38	30	16	24
Lower	41	33	43	63
TOTAL	125	100	68	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level as measured by the chi square test.

which will reach these lower socio-economic groups and change their views regarding the value of education. Past experience has shown that such programs are not always invited or readily accepted by these groups.

Parents' Attitudes Toward a High School Education Related to School Attendance

Parents of drop-outs do not value a high school education as highly as do parents of youths still in school. Whereas 92 per cent of the latter expressed the opinion that a person without a high school education would be greatly handicapped, only 60 per cent of the parents of drop-outs felt this strongly about a high school education. The evidence that many parents of drop-outs are not clearly convinced of the worth of high school training is further seen in the fact that almost two out of every five of them responded that they could see only a moderate advantage in children continuing through school. Interviewers reported that some of these parents who expressed a "moderate" answer appeared to be giving lip service to what was known by them to be an "ideal" pattern, rather than expressing their true convictions. Only 6 per cent of the parents of youths in school gave answers that indicated a lukewarm attitude toward a high school education. Just two parents from each sample group flatly denied benefits of any kind from high school experience. (See Table 8.)

TABLE 8.—School Attendance Related to Parents' Attitudes Toward a High School Education

Attitude Statement	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
The lack of a high school education is a disadvantage*				
Great	116	92	38	60
Moderate	7	6	23	37
None	2	2	2	3
TOTAL	125	100	63	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level as measured by the chi square test.

The reported responses of parents make possible the statement that parental attitudes toward education play an important part in whether a child drops out of school. This discovery has implications for the stated hypothesis of the study. It suggests, again, that programs to keep children in school must begin with an educational program for the parents.

Parents' Evaluations of Schools Related to School Attendance

All parents interviewed were asked a series of questions designed to get some indication of how they evaluated the schools their children attended or had attended. Altogether, five questions relating to the program and operation of the schools were included. The answers to these queries are reported here.

(1) Parents are divided in their opinions as to whether the high schools offered enough vocational training. One-half of the parents of youths still in school said that enough vocational training was offered in their children's high schools. However, as many as 43 per cent in this sample group gave an emphatic "no" in response to this query. The remainder did not feel they had enough information to make a response.

The responses of parents with children who have dropped out of school do not differ significantly from the responses of parents with children still in school. Slightly over one-half (52 per cent) of the parents of drop-outs thought the schools offered enough vocational training and about one-third (32 per cent) felt that local schools did not offer enough training of this kind. The remainder (16 per cent) said they didn't know enough about this question to give an answer. The findings regarding this question seem to have at least one implication for action programs.

TABLE 9.—School Attendance Related to Parents' Evaluations of Schools

Parents' Evaluation	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
High schools offer enough vocational training?				
Yes	62	50	33	52
No	53	43	20	32
Don't know	9	7	10	16
TOTALS	124	100	63	100
High schools give enough homework to students?				
Too much	8	6	8	13
Right amount	102	82	42	67
Too little	15	12	13	20
TOTALS	125	100	63	100
High schools provide enough recreation?				
Too much	15	12	9	14
About right amount	100	81	46	73
Too little	9	7	6	10
Don't know	0	0	2	3
TOTALS	124	100	63	100
Schools making the best uses of the money provided?				
Yes	79	64	29	47
No	5	4	5	8
Don't know	39	32	28	45
TOTALS	123	100	62	100
Need for improving high schools?				
Great	17	14	12	19
Moderate	42	34	17	27
Little or none	60	50	29	46
Don't know	2	2	5	8
TOTALS	121	100	63	100
People in the community are interested in schools?				
Yes	54	44	35	56
No	56	45	19	30
Don't know	14	11	9	14
TOTALS	124	100	63	100

The large number of parents who express the belief that not enough vocational education is offered suggests a felt need for more instruction of this type.

(2) The majority of the parents feel their children are or were given about the right amount of homework. However, the parents of children still in school are more convinced of this fact. Over four-fifths (82 per cent) of this group of parents expressed the opinion that their children were getting the right amount of homework. Two-thirds (67 per cent) of the parents of drop-outs said that they thought their children were given about the right amount of homework when they were in school. A larger percentage of parents of drop-outs (20) than of the parents of non-drop-outs (12) said that local high schools were giving too little homework. Paradoxically, a larger percentage of the parents of drop-outs (13 as compared with 6) also said that the high schools gave too much homework. However, these differences are not large enough to be statistically significant.

The important finding from the above data is that rural people are generally satisfied with the homework assignments their children receive. The impression given interviewers is that this is an area where parents do not feel competent and they tend to endorse the policies of the school.

(3) Most parents feel that the high schools provide about the right amount of recreation for their children. Again the responses of the parents of children still in school and of parents of drop-outs are not significantly different. Over-four-fifths of the former (81 per cent) and almost three-fourths of the latter (73 per cent) expressed the belief that about the right amount of recreation was being provided by local schools. This seems a case where an automatic endorsement is given a school policy, because of lack of strong feeling, one way or another.

(4) The majority (64 per cent) of parents of youths in school feel that the schools are making best use of the money provided them. However, less than half of the parents of drop-outs (47 per cent) are of this opinion. A large percentage of both groups (32 and 45 per cent, respectively) said they did not have enough knowledge to express an opinion on this question. Although the percentage differences between classes of parents are not large enough to be statistically significant, there is indication that parents of youths in school are more in the know regarding school expenditures. Widespread ignorance of the way school funds are used is not unusual in both urban and rural communities, however.

(5) The parents interviewed were divided in their opinions regarding the need for improving their local schools. Their responses to the query of whether or not schools needed improving brought the following re-

sults. About one-half of the parents of drop-outs voiced the belief that there was at least a moderate need to improve the schools. Those persons who indicated improvements were needed, mentioned such things as the need for better buildings, better facilities, and better trained teachers. Interestingly, almost the same percentage of both groups stated that there was little or no need for improving local schools.

(6) The response of parents to the question of whether people living in rural areas are interested in schools is somewhat surprising. A higher percentage of parents of drop-outs (56) than of the parents of youths still in school (44) felt that the people of their community were interested in schools. This reversal of the expected pattern of responses, although it is not statistically significant, leads to some interesting speculation. It is possible that parents of children in school feel more keenly the apathy of community members toward schools.

Cost of Schooling Related to School Attendance

Despite the fact that all of the schools studied were publicly supported, it was thought important to determine whether the financial condition of parents affected school attendance. The thought in mind was that the costs of such items as clothes, lunches, etc. might be considered beyond the means of the individual family. Consequently, parents interviewed were asked if they felt that keeping their children in school was or had been a financial burden.

Two-thirds of the parents with children in school and 56 per cent of the parents of drop-outs stated that keeping their children in school had not pressed them financially. Perhaps the more important discovery

TABLE 10.— School Attendance Related to Cost of Schooling

Statement of Parent	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Keeping child in school is (was) a financial burden?				
Yes	41	33	28	44
No	83	67	35	56
TOTALS	124	100	63	100

is that one out of every three parents of youths in school and close to half of the parents of drop-outs did feel schooling was an excessive expense.

Two conclusions may be drawn from the above responses. The first is that finances are an important factor in school attendance. As a matter of fact, the statements of some of the drop-outs indicate this. One girl

stated, for instance, "I would have remained in school, if I had had the money for clothes."

The second conclusion is that some families are willing to make a financial sacrifice to keep their children in school. This is evidenced by the relatively large number of parents with children in school who admitted to a financial strain brought on by the cost of schooling. The inference which may be derived from this pattern is that families with strong positive educational values will be more willing to make the necessary financial outlay, even though it means a pinch on the family budget, to keep their children in school.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT RELATED TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

It is generally conceded that the family environment might condition the child in such a way that he or she would lose interest in school. However, the school itself, with its goals of education so clearly formulated, would not be expected to discourage the student in his quest for learning. Nevertheless, the findings of certain studies have suggested that the school as an ongoing social system has certain characteristics which serve to turn some youths from an education. Interviewees were asked questions pertinent to this and other *a priori* assumptions relating to the school environment. These questions are described in the discussion which follows.

Distance from School Related to School Attendance

Distance is an important factor in social participation of various types. For example, it has been demonstrated that participation in certain community social institutions increases in direct proportion to the proximity of community members.[16] It is thus logical to expect that distance would be a factor in school attendance.

Each youth interviewed was asked how far he or she lived from school. Almost two-fifths of the youths still in school (37 per cent) lived less than one mile from school. In contrast, only 7 per cent of the drop-outs lived this close to the last school they attended. Two-thirds (65 per cent) of the drop-outs lived from 1 to 5 miles from their school, whereas only 31 per cent of the youths still in school lived this far away. A somewhat larger percentage of youths in school than of drop-outs (32 as compared with 24) lived farther than 5 miles from school. The above differences are large enough to be statistically significant. Why it is that drop-outs tend to concentrate in the middle-distances from school is hard to ex-

[16]See: William G. Mather, *The Rural Churches of Allegany County,* Ithaca: Cornell University, A.E.S. Bulletin No. 587, 1934.

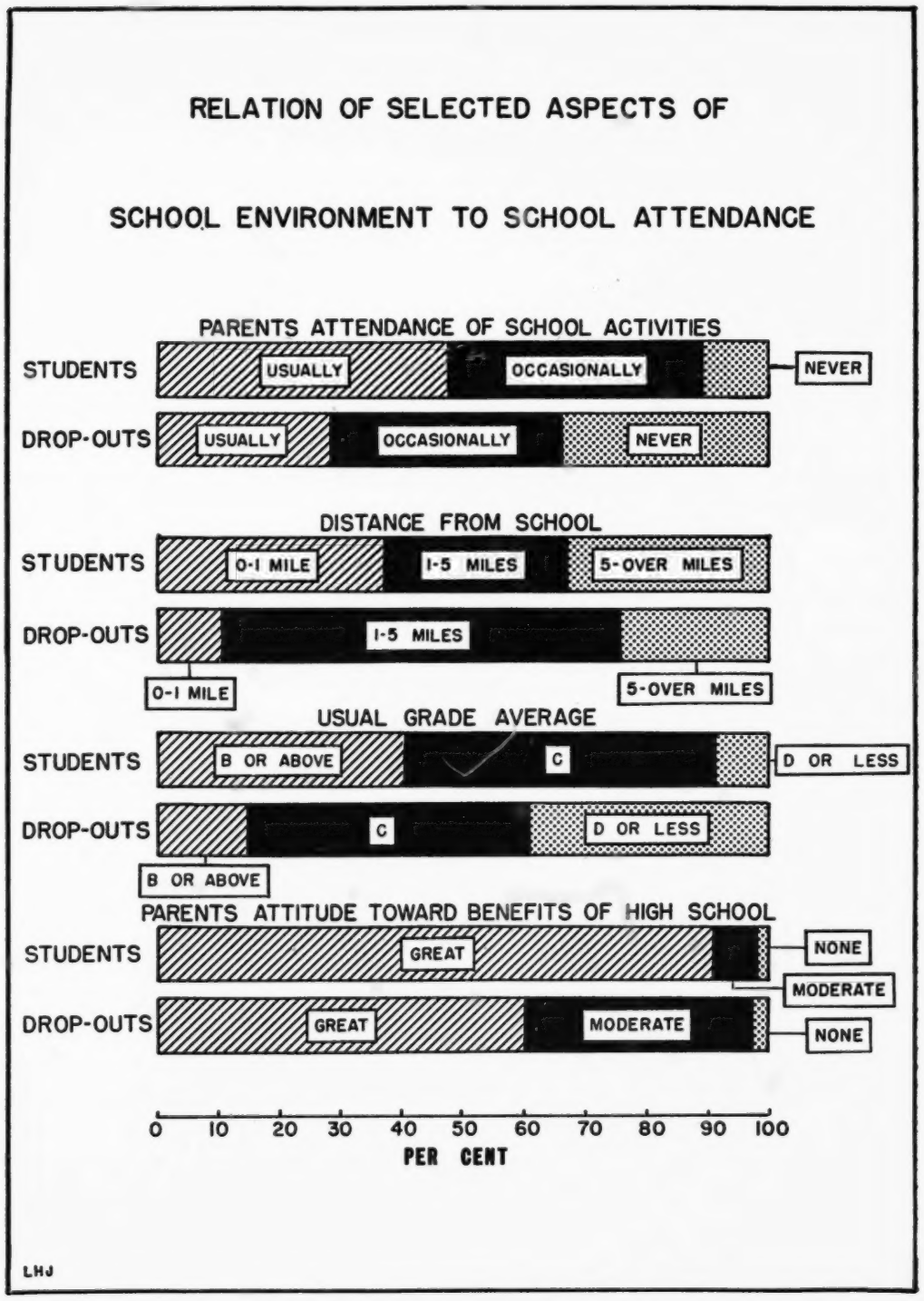

FIGURE 3.–RELATION OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

plain. It may be that the youths in school who live farther than five miles from their schools are in higher socio-economic brackets than drop-outs.

If this is true, these parents would likely own or operate choice holdings adjacent to the major highways in greater relative numbers.

TABLE 11.—School Attendance Related to Distance of Home from School and Type of Transportation to School

Distance to School and Transportation Used	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Distance from home to school:*				
0-1 mile	135	37	7	11
1-5 miles	115	31	42	65
5 or more miles	118	32	16	24
TOTAL	368	100	65	100
Transportation to school:*				
School bus	254	69	58	88
Private transportation	38	10	1	2
Walk	77	21	7	10
TOTAL	369	100	66	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level as measured by the chi square test.

In this regard, it was reported by interviewers that many of the drop-outs lived off the main highways and had to walk considerable distances to get to the school bus stop.

Employment of Youths Related to School Attendance

Contrary to what might have been expected, a larger percentage of youths in schools than of drop-outs had worked for pay. There appear to be at least two possible explanations for this pattern of behavior. First, certain personality traits, possibly a product of the family environment, carry through in and out of school. In one family system the student is taught to be industrious, energetic, and ambitious and encouraged to make his own way as much as possible. This pattern has been observed in connection with the performance of college students, for instance. Second, youths in school came from higher socio-economic status levels and undoubtedly had more opportunities for gainful employment of a part-time nature. Many relatively well-off families, for example, pay their children for work normally done around the home

TABLE 12.—School Attendance Related to Work Experience of Youths

Gainful Employment Experience	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Response*				
Yes	164	46	18	27
No	195	54	48	73
TOTAL	359	100	66	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level as measured by the chi square test.

or business by family members. Also, parents in the middle and upper socio-economic brackets have more contacts with business and professional people, who are likely to hire their children.

Academic Performance Related to School Attendance

Two measures were used to determine whether or not there was a relationship between academic performance and school attendance: the number of grades repeated and the usual grade average. Only 1 per cent of the youths in school had repeated as many as two grades, but over one-fourth (26 per cent) of the drop-outs had had to repeat two or more grades. At the other extreme, more than four-fifths of the youths in school had not repeated a single grade, but just one-third (35 per cent) of the drop-outs had fared as well. (See Table 13.)

The same pattern persists in terms of grades received. Two-fifths (39 per cent) of the drop-outs reported average grades of D or less, but only

TABLE 13.—School Attendance Related to Academic Performance

Measure of Academic Performance	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Grades repeated:*				
None	302	83	23	35
One	58	16	26	39
Two or more	5	1	17	26
TOTAL	365	100	66	100
Usual grade average:*				
B or above	150	41	10	15
C	185	51	31	46
D or less	28	8	25	39
TOTAL	363	100	66	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level as measured by the chi square test.

8 per cent of the youths in school had such low grades. In contrast, 41 per cent of the youths in school but only 15 per cent of the drop-outs maintained a B average or higher. (See Table 13.)

Grades, of course, can be indicators of more basic academic problems, such as low intelligence levels. They serve, also, to measure the adjustment of the individual to the school situation. The fact that the majority of the drop-outs were making what might be termed satisfactory grades suggests that factors other than lack of mental ability relate to school attendance. Too, it should be remembered that an over-all average does not point out difficulty which may have been experienced in a particular subject matter field.

In terms of the school environment, it can be assumed that drop-outs had not made as good an adjustment as non-drop-outs to their studies. It also seems clear that intelligence factors were not the sole factor operative in holding academic ratings down. The logical conclusion is that many students did poorly because of apathy or lack of encouragement in the home or at school.

Participation in School Organizations Related to School Attendance

The data collected show that participation in school organizations is significantly related to school attendance. School clubs and organizations of various types are an important part of school life. Therefore, it could be expected that those students who take part in them would more likely be better adjusted in the school situation. At the same time, when

TABLE 14.—School Attendance Related to Youths' Participation in School Organizations

Offices Held in School Organizations*	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
None	238	65	63	93
1-2	114	30	5	7
2 or more	16	5	0	0
TOTALS	368	100	68	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level as measured by the chi square test.

students are rejected from these associations, or when the associations do not represent pleasant experiences to them, it can be expected that the student will lose interest in school to some extent.

Mere membership in an organization was not considered a sufficient test of participation, because many clubs in school have a blanket mem-

bership. Youths interviewed were therefore not only asked how many clubs they belonged to, but how many offices they had held in these clubs. This line of questioning gave some insight of the way they were accepted by their fellow students and also of their leadership qualities.

The findings of the study show that a significantly larger percentage of drop-outs than of non-drop-outs (93 as compared with 65) did not hold office in a single organization while in school. In contrast, as many as 30 per cent of the youths still in school were officers in one or two organizations but only 7 per cent of the drop-outs had been officers in one or two groups. Five per cent of the youths in school, but no drop-outs, had held three or more officerships. (See Table 14.)

It may be deduced from the above that drop-outs are less likely to be chosen officers of their school organizations because they do not measure up to certain requirements (norms) considered necessary for such participation. Insofar as these norms represent values of the school as an ongoing social system, they tend to make the system discriminate against certain individuals.

Youths' Attitude Toward a High School Education Related to School Attendance

Youths still in school have a significantly greater appreciation of the advantages of a high school education than do drop-outs. When asked how much of a disadvantage they felt the lack of a high school education would be, over four-fifths of the youths in school (81 per cent) answered, "great." Only two-fifths (39 per cent) of the drop-outs gave this response. At the other extreme, only 3 per cent of the in-school youths, but 26 per cent of the drop-outs, voiced the opinion that a person without a high school education would have little or no disadvantage in life. One-sixth (16 per cent) of the in-school youths and one-third (35 per cent) of the drop-outs expressed the feeling that the person without a high school education would be moderately handicapped. (See Table 15.)

It is not surprising that a negative attitude toward a high school education should be closely correlated with school attendance. In the first place, such an attitude would reflect a rationalization of what they had actually done. Such an attitude would effectively serve to promote lack of interest in school. However, it also would indicate that the individual was pre-conditioned by his reference groups to place little value on the worth of schooling. In this regard, the school did not get the student to change his views to ones more in keeping with the educational values of the greater society. Perhaps this is an area where educators have a challenge. Certainly, ways could be devised to detect attitudes such as

the above and special instructions could be planned for youths who enter school with attitudes definitely negative toward education.

At this point, it is of interest to note that only 4 drop-outs had had any educational experience since leaving school. In each instance, a trade or vocational school had been attended. Approximately two-fifths

TABLE 15.—School Attendance Related to Attitude Toward a High School Education

Attitude Statement	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
How much of a disadvantage is a lack of a high school education?*				
Great	286	81	26	39
Moderate	55	16	23	35
Little or none	13	3	17	26
TOTAL	354	100	66	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level as measured by the chi square test.

(38 per cent) of the drop-outs indicated that they had some educational plans for the future. Vocational schools were named as the type of school in mind in each case. The latter suggests that firsthand contact with the job market had forced home the realization of the need for some type of skill.

Interpersonal Factors and School Attendance

Previous investigations have concluded that certain interpersonal factors weigh heavily in the adjustment of individuals and groups to social situations. Consequently, the youths interviewed were asked three questions to determine how well they were getting along with their fellows in the classroom. Their responses to each question are summarized in the discussion which follows.

The data collected suggests that many drop-outs feel that rural students are rejected by town students. As many as one-fourth of them said that they were aware of a "feeling" between the two groups. One drop-out summarized the opinions of those who gave responses of this type by saying, "they (town students) think they're the most." Although only 10 per cent of the youths in school said they thought there was some feeling between town and country students, this percentage is large enough to indicate an awareness of "feeling" along this line. Also, it is possible, in the light of observations made, that some interviewees hesitated to affirm the presence of ill-feeling between classes of students.

It should not be overlooked that the majority of the drop-outs, as well as of students still in school, could see no antagonism or rejection

between the two groups. However, the fact that such a feeling is significantly related to school attendance indicates the importance of this factor. (See Table 16.) It may be noted that interviewers were especially aware of feelings of this type at certain schools. Perhaps the problem is more or less localized in nature. Nevertheless, the fact that it does exist at all is important from the standpoint of this study.

The second question asked related to the ease with which friends were made. Almost all the youths interviewed said they found it easy to

TABLE 16.—School Attendance Related to Selected Aspects of Adjustment in School

Selected Statements	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Do you notice any feeling between rural and town students?*				
Yes	32	10	16	24
No	280	90	50	76
TOTAL	312	100	66	100
Do you find it easy to make friends?				
Yes	346	94	62	94
No	22	6	4	6
TOTAL	368	100	66	100
Do you find it easy to recite in class?				
Yes	198	54	33	50
No	170	46	33	50
TOTAL	368	100	66	100

*Differences between youths in school and drop-outs are statistically significant at the .01 level as measured by the chi square test.

make friends. In fact, there was no significant difference in the responses of drop-outs and non-drop-outs. The same percentage of both groups (94 per cent) said they made friends easily.

The youths interviewed were about evenly divided in their responses to the third question, "Do you find it easy to recite in class?" About half of the in-school group (54 per cent) and of the drop-out group (50 per cent) answered yes to this query. This finding suggests that personality traits, such as introvertedness, do not relate especially to the school attendance problem.

Youths' Appraisal of Teachers Related to School Attendance

In the primary planning for this study, it had been surmised that the status-role position of the teacher might not have been completely

TABLE 17.—Youths' Appraisal of Teachers, Related to School Attendance

Appraisal Statements	Youths in School		Drop-outs	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
Number of teachers interested in student:				
All	83	23	25	38
Most	200	54	26	39
Few	85	23	13	20
None	0	0	2	3
TOTAL	368	100	66	100
Number of teachers fair to students:				
All	79	22	25	38
Most	229	62	32	49
Few	58	16	7	11
None	1	0	1	2
TOTAL	367	100	65	100
Feeling toward teachers:				
Liked most	283	77	55	83
Disliked most	9	3	4	6
No special feeling	75	20	7	11
TOTAL	367	100	66	100

understood or appreciated by some students. Also, it was felt that the teaching policies of certain schools might tend to antagonize youths with particular personality traits. Therefore, all youths queried were asked three questions: Are, or were, the teachers in your school interested in students? Are, or were, the teachers in your school fair to the students? What are, or were, your feelings toward your teachers?

The analysis of the data pertaining to these questions shows no significant difference between the responses of drop-outs and non-drop-outs. In each instance the large majority of both groups gave answers judged favorable; that is, they thought most teachers were interested in students, were fair, and they liked most of them. Detailed tabulations of the responses for each question may be seen in Table 17.

Occupational Aspirations of Youths Related to School Attendance

Each of the youths interviewed was asked what he hoped to make his lifetime occupation. This query was designed to see whether youths in school would have higher occupational aspirations than drop-outs. Hypothetically, it was felt that positive educational values would be posi-

tively associated with higher occupational ambitions. The responses of boys and girls were tabulated separately because of the nature of status-role differences between the sexes.

The answers given are revealing, although a relatively large percentage of both groups of boys (28 per cent of the youths in school and 19 per cent of the drop-outs) said they didn't know what they wanted to do as a lifework. Over one-third of the boys still in school planned to go into professional or technical work, but only one-twentieth of the drop-outs hoped for such a career. In contrast, only one-fifth of the boys in school, but two-fifths of the drop-outs, were looking forward to jobs as craftsmen. Very few of the boys in school (5 per cent) wanted to be farmers; however, one out of every five drop-outs had this type of work in mind. The findings reflect a trend which is of growing concern to persons interested in the future of agriculture.

The contrast in occupational aspirations is even more apparent in the instances of the girls. Almost all drop-outs (85 per cent) were planning to be housewives. By comparison, over one-fourth of the girls in

TABLE 18.—School Attendance Related to Occupational Aspirations of Youths, by Sex

Aspirations	Youths in School				Drop-outs			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No.	*Per Cent*	*No.*	*Per Cent*	*No.*	*Per Cent*	*No.*	*Per Cent*
Lifetime occupation desired:								
Professional, technical, and kindred occupation	62	36	55	28	3	10	2	6
Farming	9	5	0	0	6	19	0	0
Craftsman, foreman, and kindred occupation	34	20	5	3	13	42	1	3
Service	9	5	15	8	1	3	0	0
Secretarial	0	0	61	31	0	0	0	0
Housewife	0	0	29	15	0	0	30	85
Other	11	6	3	2	2	6	0	0
Don't know	49	28	26	13	6	19	2	6
TOTAL	174	100	194	100	31	100	35	100

school wanted to do some kind of professional or technical work and three-tenths of them were planning to be secretaries. Only 15 per cent said they were looking forward to being housewives. (See Table 18.) The comment may be made that the schools tend to play down the role of

wife and mother, a fact which has been taken cognizance of in recent years.

It can be concluded from the above findings that those youths dropping out of school are looking forward to different life careers than those who stay in school. This finding supports the thesis that educational values and occupational aspirations are closely connected.

At this point it is interesting to note the present employment of drop-outs. Of the 31 boys involved, 3 were farm laborers, 4 were in some sort of service work, 4 were craftsmen, and the remainder were not working for pay. Only 5 of the 35 girls were working, and all 5 were in service work.

FIELD NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Conferences were held with the superintendents, principals, and certain teachers of the schools studied. These sessions were arranged in order to obtain insights which might not be obtained in other ways. In addition, interviewers were asked to report their impressions and observations of the homes of youths in school and of drop-outs, as they went about their regular business of interviewing. The notes and observations derived from the above are summarized in this section.

Observations Relating to Home and Family Life

The home situation of drop-outs, as compared with non-drop-outs, seemed to the researchers to be revealing in many ways. There were, of course, manifestations of higher socio-economic and educational levels in the homes of the latter. The first impression is that, in some ways, the typical drop-out family was harder to approach than the typical non-drop-out family. (This was more true in one sample parish than the other.) However, once the "ice" was broken almost all interviewees proved cooperative. The drop-out families tended to be more difficult to interview in the sense that they frequently engaged in long discourses "against" certain state or national government officials.

A second impression was that the homes of drop-outs appeared generally to be less well kept. One interviewer stated it was not unusual for him to have to thread his way through assorted debris to reach the house, which was usually unpainted and in poor state of repair. (This condition was also more prevalent in one of the sample areas than in the other.)

Another generalized impression of the drop-out families is that they seem much more dissatisfied with their lot and to be obsessed with a feeling of pessimism. The observation was made that the music found in the local juke boxes of one of the areas seemed to express the mood of unhappiness and insecurity found in some of these homes. Such titles as,

"If I Had the Wings of an Angel," "I Cry a Tear," "Walking Alone," and "Tears on My Pillow" had great popularity.

The families of drop-outs did not evince, overtly or covertly, values which could be construed as stressing educational or occupational achievement. Rather, the idea seemed to be encouraged that too much education was a useless waste of time and that schools were a subversive influence in many ways. Statements were made to the effect that children learned "laziness" in school and that the subjects the school taught were not practical.

Parents of drop-outs demonstrated much less interest in school activities and programs than did parents of youths in school. In fact, the former seemed to have only the vaguest notion of the school as an ongoing system.

A comparison of comments of parents of the two sample groups of youths suggests that drop-out families have lower occupational aspirations. They tended to give the impression that a good "public" job (meaning wage work of some kind) was about as much as one could expect, in terms of both status and income. On the other hand, families of youths still in school more often cited professional and proprietorial positions as desirable.

Observations Relating to School Life

There was a considerable range in the physical plants and the operation of the eight schools studied. Observations concerning them are necessarily brief and summary in form.

The schools studied were small and faced with a decreasing enrollment related to population decline. Some "threats" of consolidation had been heard at almost every school and possibly this fact occasioned an initial suspicion of the researchers on the part of certain principals and teachers. These reactions soon changed when it became evident the study was not concerned with local affairs.

Observations related to the school are helpful in understanding the drop-out problem in many ways. The frank replies of principals and teachers reveal certain situations which they recognized as contributing to the above problem, but for which they had no solution. The basic situations may be described as follows.

Frequently, children from the lower income families attend elementary schools separated from the high schools or else their parents move into the area at about the time their children are ready for high school. Consequently, these youths have difficulty becoming integrated into the schools' programs. Students who have come up through the grades in the same schools have their own cliques and interest groups, and tend to shut out the newcomers.

The second factor which apparently enters the picture is the social distance which separates the low-income, lower class student from the middle and upper class student. This situation may be described briefly as follows. The lower-income student comes to school with certain highly visible symbols of his lower status background. His clothes are not quite up to the standard expected, nor is his speech or his manners. In addition he may not exhibit all the habits of cleanliness which have come to be commonly accepted in local "middle class" circles. Over-all, he has internalized a set of values which in certain particulars differs quite radically from the "norms" of the school set. To illustrate, one principal remarked that this class of youth was not interested in the schools' social, athletic, or musical programs and that all they could think about was hunting and fishing.

What happens to the lower-income student with his apparently "lower" standards in the high school situation? First, he is rejected to some degree by his fellow students. This is apparent in his being given less opportunity to participate in their school or home social activities. Second, some of his teachers discriminate against him, intentionally or unintentionally, because he is also judged by them according to "middle-class" standards and expectations. It is possibly no reflection on the teacher that she "gives up" rather easily on the boy or girl whose speech defects are "so" pronounced, whose educational background leaves so much lacking, who perhaps does not exhibit certain common courtesies, and whose father might be known for his "shiftlessness."

Faced with a school climate as described above, it is easy to see how certain students develop a feeling of insecurity and even resentment. In fact, the expected pattern would be one of aggressively seeking for recognition through violation of certain school norms. Actually, drop-outs were occasionally characterized as "trouble makers" whom the school was glad to see leave.

On the other side of the picture, examples were brought to the attention of the interviewers showing that school situations had been such as to bring out the latent abilities of youngsters from lower class homes. One vocational agriculture teacher took a great deal of pride in relating how he had obtained jobs as welders for 21 of "his" boys. There was indication that vocational agriculture teachers had more success with low-income students, possibly because of their subject matter (especially the craft skills taught), and because of their work with the parents of the children.

At this point, it is of interest to report a comment of certain parents of drop-outs. They felt that vocational courses should be taught before high school because so many boys tended to drop out at 16, just about the time they passed to high school.

The above are some of the subjective observations derived from the study. The insights obtained are important in that they help explain the "whys" of the drop-out problem.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This investigation was conducted to evaluate some factors affecting the attainment in school of rural youth. Information for the study was obtained from personal interviews with the junior and senior students in eight carefully selected high schools, with youths 16-19 years of age who had dropped out of these high schools, and with the parents of both groups of youths. In addition, personal conferences were held with the principals and certain teachers at the sample schools. The hypothetical premise for the study was that the rural school drop-out problem could be explained in terms of certain environmental factors relating to the family and to the school. The following summary of the findings is organized according to the major divisions of the study.

Summary

The first concern of the study was to determine why rural youths dropped out of school. To this end, all drop-outs were asked why they quit school. By far the largest number dropped out because of lack of interest. Marriage was the second most important reason given, but this reason was almost exclusively given by girls. Other stated reasons included: needed at home, finances, and health. Interestingly, the parents of drop-outs and the principals of the sample schools gave essentially the same reasons as did the youths, when asked why the drop-outs had left school.

The investigation indicated that certain factors associated with the home and family environment were closely related to school attendance. Drop-outs' families differed from non-drop-outs' families as follows: From an occupational standpoint, the fathers of drop-outs were more likely to be farmers than non-farmers, farm laborers than farm operators, and doing wage work rather than professional or technical work. The educational attainment of the fathers and mothers of drop-outs was far less than that of the fathers and mothers of youths still in school. Also, the parents of drop-outs participated less in school activities, and placed a lower value on a high school education than did the parents of youths in school.

Several questions posed to each group of interviewees were designed to see whether or not the school environment of youths was related to school attendance. Distance between school and home was determined to be significantly associated with school attendance. Drop-outs were

more likely to use public school buses for transportation to school. It was also discovered that youths in school had more gainful employment experience than drop-outs. The grades of drop-outs were found to be considerably lower, and they had failed more grades. Drop-outs also took part in fewer school activities and were less likely to be officers in the school organizations to which they belonged.

A considerable number of drop-outs and some youths still in school said they were aware of a "feeling" between town and country students. However, this type of reaction seemed to be localized in one or two of the schools. About half of both groups admitted they found it difficult to recite in class. The majority of both groups thought most of the teachers were interested in the students and were fair to them. Almost all youths questioned liked most of their teachers.

Personal interviews with youths determined that boys and girls still in school differed in occupational aspirations from the drop-outs. The occupational aspirations of boys still in school tended toward professional and technical positions, while boys who had dropped out of school were interested in craft-type jobs. Most girls still in school wanted to become professionals or do secretarial work, while girls who had dropped out of school generally wanted to be housewives.

Other findings of the study are of interest but do not seem to be causally related to the drop-out problem. About half of the parents interviewed thought the high schools should offer more vocational courses, although there was no significant difference in the opinions of parents of drop-outs and non-drop-outs on this score. The majority of both groups of parents felt their children received about the right amount of homework and that the schools provided about the right amount of recreation. Parents were about equally divided in their opinions regarding the need for improving their local schools and on whether or not the people of their communities were interested in their schools. About half of both groups of parents replied that keeping their children in school had been a financial burden.

Interviewers were asked to report their impressions of the homes and schools they visited in an effort to supplement the objective findings of the study with subjective information. A summary of these reports indicated that drop-outs tended to live in poorer homes. Their parents seemed to be more antagonistic toward the "government," to value education less, and to have less interest in community schools.

Observations made at the sample schools indicate that lower income students frequently find themselves in a social situation with which they cannot successfully cope. They are expected by their teachers and peers to adhere to standards of behavior and aspirations which are foreign to what they have learned in their homes. The result is a feeling

of rejection and insecurity and, not infrequently, the development of an aggressive antagonism. In this way the schools may be said to discourage attendance.

Conclusions

Findings of this study leave little doubt that educational attainment in rural areas (as well as urban areas) is closely related to environmental factors, and is a two-fold problem of social adjustment. This phenomenon is explained in terms of the theoretical concept of the social system. Each family and each school is an ongoing system with certain goals and value orientations and certain norms of expected behavior. In the first instance, the family as a social system sets certain standards of behavior for its members. To be adjusted, family members must internalize the values of the family. Those members who subscribe to a different set of values tend to become suspect and to be regarded as misfits. Since everyone strives to "belong," especially in his family group, it is easy to see how there is little or no incentive for youths in some homes to continue schooling. To be too ambitious in this direction is to appear to want to become "better" than one's family, etc. Conversely, in a family that stresses education as a value, a "good" adjustment is one that includes high educational attainment. In this instance, dropping out of school represents a maladjustment.

The second adjustment problem centers in the school situation. Again, it is a matter of feeling wanted and secure. Where distance prevents close ties with the school, or where standards of behavior are expected or demanded which are strange to certain youngsters, they will adjust by dropping out of school as soon as possible. This is especially true if all means of achieving recognition are removed and a "social distance" set up which excludes one from informal types of participation.

In contrast, where the student's problems are understood and a deliberate effort is made to satisfy his socio-psychological needs as well as his educational needs, he will tend to feel "adjusted" in the school situation. In fact, a good adjustment at school may overcome the handicaps of a poor home environment insofar as school achievement is concerned.

Obviously the above findings represent a serious problem to all U.S. citizens. The nation is losing a considerable amount of talent in the sense that many capable rural youths are not receiving the benefits of advanced education. National progress may be said to be hampered in direct proportion to the loss of this talent.

Certain clues for meeting the challenge may be derived from the present study. A starting place for action programs is suggested by the finding that negative educational values in rural homes are largely re-

sponsible for biasing the educational opportunities of youth. Perhaps more attention should be devoted to "selling" education to rural families. Certainly, it makes as much sense to promote the education of youth, as a human resource, as it does to encourage practices leading to higher yields of crops and livestock. At the same time, school officials should be made acutely aware of the special handicaps of children from lower-income homes. These are not easy solutions.